

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 4177

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SPOP, DR

SUBJECT: FAMILY PLANNING

REF: A. SD 3607

B. SD 4105

1. AT OUR REQUEST, SECRETARY OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PEREYRA ARIZA, AND DR. LUIS GONZALEZ FABRA, FAMILY PLANNING EXPERT IN HEALTH SECRETARIAT AND SPARKPLUG OF PRIVATE SECTOR ENDEAVORS IN FAMILY PLANNING, MET WITH AMBASSADOR, USAID DIRECTOR AND SEVERAL OTHER MISSION PERSONNEL AT THE EMBASSY FOR A TWO HOUR SESSION ON POPULATION CONTROL. REF B. DESCRIBES THE FACTUAL DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION HERE WHICH AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE IS AMONG THE MORE ACUTE IN THE WORLD. OUR PURPOSE IN PROPOSING THE MEETING WAS TO MANIFEST DEEP, DISCREET CONCERN OVER THIS PROBLEM SINCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COMBINED ECONOMIC

ASSISTANCE EFFORTS OF USAID, IDB, IBRD, UN, OAS, AND THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, AS WELL AS THE DIRECT ASSISTANCE BY OTHER FOREIGN NATIONS HERE (ISRAEL, SPAIN, ETC.) IS SERIOUSLY DIMINISHED BY THE RAPID POPULATION INCREASE. IF IN THE YEARS TO COME SOME SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION

IN THE RATE OF DEMOGRAPHIC GROWTH IS NOT ATTAINED, THE TOTALITY OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT EFFORT HERE MAY WELL IN THE NET AMOUNT TO A HOLDING ACTION AT BEST AND PROBABLY REALLY ONLY SIGNIFY THE RETARDATION OF AN INEXORABLE LOSING BATTLE. THE WORD "DEVELOPMENT" WOULD THEN NO LONGER REALISTICALLY APPLY AND WE SHOULD PERHAPS WITHIN OUR OWN BUREAUCRACY AT LEAST START THINKING ABOUT ANOTHER WORD WHICH
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WOULD DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ILLUSION AND FACT.

2. ANOTHER PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO ENABLE THE AMBASSADOR TO COMPREHEND AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE THE FAMILY PLANNING SITUATION HERE, PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS, PRIOR TO HIS NEXT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BALAGUER (REQUESTED FOR MID-OCTOBER). SINCE THE PRESIDENT HAD MANIFESTED CONCERN OVER POPULATION INCREASE IN THE DOM REP AND HAD AGREED TO PURSUE THE QUESTION AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING, THE AMBASSADOR INTENDS TO TAKE THE OCCASION OF PRESENTING HIM WITH THE PROMISED CHART PROJECTIONS (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND HAVE HAPPILY ALREADY BEEN POUCHED) TO DELVE INTO THE QUESTION FURTHER.

3. THE SECRETARY NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF A SUCCESSFUL FAMILY PLANNING EFFORT. BOTH OUR GUESTS WERE ARTICULATE AND WE FOUND THE DISCUSSION FRUITFUL. THEIR STATISTICS INDICATE THAT ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF THE CHILD-BEARING FEMALES IN THE COUNTRY HAVE BEEN REACHED BY THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM (82,000 OUT OF 800,000). THEY ESTIMATE THAT SOME 15 PERCENT LEAVE THE PROGRAMS

BUT THEY DO NOT REALLY KNOW (WE THINK THEIR ESTIMATE IS LOW). THEY HAVE NO EFFECTIVE FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM. THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO REACH 21 PERCENT OF THE CHILD-BEARING WOMEN BY THE END OF 1976, A GOAL WHICH UNDER PROBING THEY CONSIDERED OPTIMISTIC.

4. THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HERE IS CONDUCIVE TO A LARGER EFFORT (DISCREET, OF COURSE). THE MAIN CONSTRAINT IS ADEQUATE NUMBERS OF DOCTORS AND NURSES. DOCTORS IN THE RURAL AREAS WORK MORNINGS ONLY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH (INCLUDING FAMILY PLANNING) AND DEVOTE THE REST OF THEIR DAY TO PRIVATE PRACTICE. OUR GUESTS ESTIMATED THAT A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THE SIXTY DOCTORS IN THE RURAL AREA DOING SOME FAMILY PLANNING WOULD, IF THEIR SALARIES WERE DOUBLED, DEDICATE AN ADDITIONAL FOUR HOURS DAILY PRIMARILY TO FAMILY PLANNING. THE ESTIMATED COST INVOLVED WOULD BE 250,000 PESOS ANNUALLY. AUXILIARY NURSES WHO ARE THE MAINSTAY OF THE NURSES CORPS HERE ARE NOT, BUT COULD BE, THOROUGHLY TRAINED IN FAMILY PLANNING MATTERS. LAW HERE PERMITS THEM TO DO THE NECESSARY INSTEAD OF A DOCTOR EXCEPT IN COMPLICATED CASES. MID-WIVES WHO ARE NUMEROUS AND HAVE SOME STANDING IN THE VILLAGES HAVE NOT RPT NOT BEEN ENLISTED IN THE PROGRAM (OUR GUESTS THOUGHT THEY WOULD BE VALUABLE "EXTENDED ARMS" OF THE RURAL CLINICS PARTICULARLY FOR EDUCATIONAL AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES). THEY ESTIMATED THAT BY PAYING THE MID-WIVES SOME

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20-30 PESOS PER MONTH A GOOD NUMBER COULD BE ENLISTED.

5. WHEN, SPEAKING THEORETICALLY, WE ASKED WHAT THE IMPACT MIGHT BE ON THE FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM IF A QUARTER OF A MILLION PESOS TO OBTAIN FULL-TIME DOCTORS, A SUM OF PERHAPS 50,000 PESOS TO TRAIN AUXILIARY NURSES, AND A SIMILAR SUM TO ENCOURAGE MID-WIVES TO PARTICIPATE WERE AVAILABLE, PEREYRA AND GONZALEZ RESPONDED EMPHATIC-

ALLY THAT THE 21 PERCENT TARGET WOULD BECOME A REALISTIC GOAL (THEY SEEM TO REGARD 21 PERCENT AS THE MINIMUM REQUIRED TO MAKE A DENT IN THE PROBLEM) AND PERHAPS SURPASSED, BUT CERTAINLY ACHIEVED BEFORE THE END OF 1976.

6. WE THINK THAT IT IS IMPERATIVE AND TIMELY THAT A MAJOR DOMINICAN EFFORT BE MADE TO ATTACK THIS PROBLEM AND INTEND TO USE OUR INFLUENCE HERE TO THAT END. ANTICIPATING THAT PRESIDENT BALAGUER WILL RE-AFFIRM HIS PRE-OCCUPATION AND IN HIS QUIET FASHION SEEK ASSISTANCE, WE SHOULD

DEEPLY APPRECIATE RECEIVING ADVICE FROM THE DEPARTMENT AS TO WHAT RESOURCES (OFFICIAL OR FROM FOUNDATIONS) MIGHT BE MADE AVAILABLE (HOPEFULLY QUICKLY), PERHAPS ON A MATCHING BASIS WITH GODR FUNDS, AS A STIMULANT TO GETTING THIS ESSENTIAL PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND.
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